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ABSTRACT

A well-rounded program of extramural opportunities for females which provides experience between the intramural model and the existing male intercollegiate models is presently nonexistent. Five possible alternatives to guide the future of athletics are suggested: (a) women could demand access to the existing model of male athletics; (b) women could devise and insist upon an alternative model of athletics which would provide programs for athletes of either sex; (c) the physical education profession should do all in its power to encourage public service community agencies to establish a wide range of competitive sports experiences for those children, youth, and young adults who have learned sports skills in their curricular physical education classes; (d) special colleges should be established for superior athletes, much as there are conservatories for music and studios for art and ballet; and, (e) departments of intercollegiate athletics should continue to offer programs in selected sports for outstanding male and female athletes. (Author/MJM)

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THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS: ENTERTAINMENT OR EDUCATION?

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Although the title of this session is "The Future of Women's Athletics", this topic can now scarcely be dealt with apart from a consideration of the future of men's athletics as well. If this had not been, previously, a proper stance, recent developments regarding Title IX have made it imperative that they be considered together.

When we talk about the future of Women's Athletics we are, of course, talking about a vast number of things, the most obvious being women and athletics. Therefore, we need to consider: 1) how might we need to change our attitudes and beliefs concerning women, their abilities, their potentialities, their needs, their desires; 2) how might we need to change our attitudes, beliefs and actions concerning athletics, in general. It is not surprising that the movement for greater opportunity for women has recently found its most dramatic expression in the realm of sport — sport being, in our contemporary society, so pervasive and so visable and enjoying the almost unassailable position of a quasi-religion. I am entirely optimistic about the future of women in our society - their abilities, their tenacity and, I trust, their good sense will prevail. I am not so optimistic about the future of athletic sports, surrounded as they are by the most incredibly illogical rhetoric, pretension and slippery

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thinking.

Now, we should get clear in our minds from the outset just what we are talking about when we say "athletics". Are we talking about professional athletics or amateur athletics? About private athletic enterprises (like clubs, [redacted]) which frequently have as their primary purpose the development of proficient performers? About athletic activities which are sponsored by various community agencies (eg: Boys Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, etc.)? Or, about athletic activities which are organized and conducted under the auspices of agencies whose central, institutionalized purpose is education (eg: schools and colleges)? The persistent failure to consider whether a different rationale should logically underlie and guide these various programs has been a major cause of a great deal of the uncertainity and conflict which has been historically attatched to American interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics; and there is ample reason to believe that this confusion is more pervasive today than it has ever been before. We act toward sport in much the same way we once acted toward motherhood, applepie and the flag. Aided and abetted by television, the press and popular magazines - all of which do as much to manufacture news as they do to report events - the typical American attitude has become: "we mustn't ask too many troblesome or embarassing questions about athletics for fear we might discover some things which we would rather not know." The propaganda of the public media has infected the

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entire scope of our lives, suggesting that the models it projects are the only ones which are worthy of emulation. Nowhere is this more evident than in sports. The reluctence to look closely and objectively at athletic sports has had a number of unfortunate consequences, but none seems so tragic or so insideous than those which involves the educational sector. In an article entitled "Competition out of Bounds" which appeared in the January, 1973 Quest William Sadler contends that: "one of the tragedies of our own era is that the spirit of competition has become so widespread and intense that it is out of control. Instead of providing a relief from this, organized sports function to keep it out of control. We continually refuse to think bravely and openly about what sport might come to mean in the full context of social and personal life (129-131)." This same view has been advanced for over three decades by such noted sociologist and social critics as David Riesmann, Reuel Denny and Lewis Mumford. I intend to concentrate on athletics conducted in conjunction with educational institutions: 1) it is the category with which I am most familiar; 2)it is the one, presumably, with which our professional physical education organization (A.A.H.P.E.R.) should be most concerned; 3) it is the one where the greatest amount of misunderstanding exists and where a confusion of rationale and distortion of values can be so potentially harmful. For nearly 100 years both the general public and educational administrations have confused two forms of athletic endeavor, each of which has its own purpose

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and place. These two forms might be characterized as: "Athletics are Educational" and "Athletics are Entertainment". I cannot take credit for this designation; commentators on the athletic scene have used it for decades. In 1915 C.W. Savage, Director of Physical Education at Oberlin College, stated before the N.C.A.A.: "During the past 10 years it has been increasingly borne in upon me that there are two great tendencies, which I roughly characterize as the professional and the educational .... The facts of the case are that there is little or no justification of the present status of intercollegiate sport as a legitimate interest in an educational system." A similar analysis was provided in 1929 by another Savage in the well-known Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching report, American College Athletics. The majority of the 1929 observations concerning the problems of American athletics were recently repeated in George Hanford's Report to the American Council on Education of an Inquiry into the Need for and Feasibility of a National Study of Intercollegiate Athletics (March 22, 1974). The "Athletics are Entertainment" model was originally a creation of students and alumni. It was taken over by college administrations when abuses became too evident and soon became institutionalized in Departments of Intercollegiate Athletics. Throughout its 68 year history the National Collegiate Athletic Association Annual Proceedings have provided a continuing source of contradictory

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statements which describe improvements in the control and conduct of the men's athletics appearing in juxtaposition with a recitation of the abuses and exaggerations which have continually attatched themselves to these programs. The "Athletics are Entertainment" model was, to all intents and purposes, established before the American Physical Education Association was founded. "Athletics are Educational", presumably, is the model which Departments of Physical Education encouraged, fostered and supported. Women's Departments were considerably more successful in developing programs of competition based upon a philosophy that "Athletics are Educational" than were their male colleagues, but in so doing, the women were forced to accept the dictum "women are different". It is probably not unreasonable to suggest that the presence and the prominence of the "Athletics are Entertainment" model - especially in the form of highly developed intercollegiate football - seriously impeded the establishment of the "Athletics are Educational" model which the physical education professional leadership upheld. While it has been frequently asserted that the intramural programs provided adequately for those students who are not able to become members of athletic teams, anyone who has engaged in interscholastic competition knows full well that this is almost never true. The experience of being a member of a team, traveling with that team, a commitment to practice, the relationship of the team members to the coach and to each other, etc. place extramural competitions in a different realm.

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We must also ask for whom and for what purposes is the scholastic athletic program conducted. The general public? The alumni? The student body? The prestige of the institution? To generate gifts and endowments? The participating athletes? How honestly we answer this question will greatly determine the type of programs which we believe should be fostered. Has physical education been perpetuating a myth and living a lie for over half a century by urging the potential educational value of athletic competition in the broad, liberal education of children, youth and young adults? If not, how dare educational institutions even attempt to justify limiting extracurricular opportunities to such a small percentage of the student-body? Our activity classes teach students the skills of sports but, unless we provide them, where shall they have the opportunity to put these skills into practice in controlled competitive experiences? What is currently missing is a well-rounded program of extramural opportunities which provides experience between the intramural model and the existing male intercollegiate model.

Five possible alternatives choices which could guide the Future of Athletics could be suggested:

1) Women can demand - and now they have the legal power to obtain - access to the existing model of male athletics (although this model may soon need to be modified for everyone because of financial difficulties). If this course of action is taken, women should

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exercise great caution that they do not settle for programs in which they will ultimately find reduced opportunities. They will need to build in rational for women to serve as administrators, coaches and trainers. There will have to be separate teams in some sports (eg: basketball; unless the height and weight of large numbers of women will soon increase dramatically). Considering the voracity with which physical educators have historically criticized this model it would seem hypocritical to support its expansion for women, or even its retention for men.

2) Women can devise and insist upon an alternative model of athletics which would provide programs for athletes of either sex. This model would stress education rather than entertainment. It is the philosophy which Women's Departments of Physical Education upheld and perpetuated for decades. It is not unreasonable many male students would also prefer this type of athletic opportunity.

3) The physical education profession should do all in its power to encourage public service community agencies to establish a wide range of competitive sports experiences for those children, youth and young adults who have learned sports skills in their curricular physical education classes. The extramural competitive athletic program would, then, move out of the schools and into the community. This is a model which is used with considerable success in many European countries, where it is not unusual for several teams from a Dutch town, for example, to travel to Belgium or to England to play matches

with comparable teams in the host country. The players are housed with families in the host community and concerted efforts are made to insure that such experiences will be broadly educational.

4) Special colleges should be established for superior athletes, much as there are conservatories for music and studios for art and for ballet. Promising athletes who aspire to the professional ranks, to Olympic or other international competitions would enroll. The curriculum would emphasize sports but other studies would be included. This is a model which is used in several other countries (eg: the Institute National des Sports, Joinville, France). Colleges and universities would, then, conduct educationally sound, low-key extramural athletic programs for a much larger number of their matriculated students.

5) Departments of Intercollegiate Athletics (especially in the so-called "major", money-making sports) would continue to offer programs in selected sports for outstanding male and female athlete-students. The majority of participants would be recruited for their athletic prowress and their potential for bringing publicity to the institution. They would be paid a respectable salary (the euphanism "grants-in-aid" would be done away with as would the unworkable designation of amateur-professional). Athletes could be allowed to participate as long as they are making progress toward a degree. Professional sports franchises, which benefit substantially from the collegiate programs,

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would be expected to contribute to their support, probably through some central agency. The whole enterprise could be run openly for what it is - a business. Those student fees which are now directed to Departments of Intercollegiate Athletics (in some instances these amount to over half a million dollars) would be directed to a wide range of extramural competitive sports clubs (which might very will include many of the same sports found in the intercollegiate athletic program). These clubs would have proper coaching, medical support, safe transportation, adquate equipment, etc. Recruiting, financial aid, extensive travel, elaborate seasons and culminating tournaments, etc. would be prohibited. Considering the multiplicity of interests regarding sport in America, this model, I believe, has the best chance of being implemented of any which departs from the traditional model.

Before closing, one additional question seems imperative: "Is it the function of educational institutions to follow the dictates of society, or is it their function to lead"? If it is, in the case of athletics, time for us to lead then nothing short of a major revolution in our way of thinking about both women and athletics will suffice.